

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 12, 2021

Mr. John Gay, Inspector General
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
4 World Trade Center, 150 Greenwich Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Mr. Gay:

Authorized by Congress, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) has long been responsible for developing and modernizing the entire region to improve commerce and trade. These responsibilities were expanded to include managing the region's three largest airports in 1948. We take immense pride in knowing that the Port Authority maintains the primary gateway to the world's most vibrant region. Therefore, we are dismayed by media reports highlighting that the vendor of the PANYNJ's three airports is charging preposterous prices for food and drink. We are heartened that the Port Authority has called on the OTG concessionaire to audit its prices. However, we urge your office to conduct a wider and independent review into OTG on behalf of visitors to our great region.

The menu of reported gouging for various items at Newark Liberty International, John Kennedy International, and LaGuardia Airports is almost farcical: \$27.95 for a Sam Adam beer, \$10.90 for french fries, or \$4 for a small orange juice.¹ In the initial report, customers called the pricing "a ripoff," "underwhelming," and expressed rightful indignation they were being shaken down while trying to purchase refreshment.² Picked up by outlets around the world, the story has made our region the object of ridicule and scorn.³

Pursuant to Article IV, Section 6 of the PANYNJ interstate compact, "[t]he inspector general shall be responsible for receiving and investigating, where appropriate, all complaints regarding fraud, waste, and abuse by commissioners, officers, and employees of the port authority or third-parties doing business with the port authority."⁴ There should be no question about the authority of the Inspector General to audit the bad behavior of PANYNJ's vendors. If OTG or other vendors given the opportunity of doing business within the PANYNJ's areas cannot operate without ripping off customers, then we hope recommendations will be made to relieve them of that privilege.

¹ <https://www.thecity.nyc/2021/8/1/22604814/nyc-airport-high-prices-food-spurs-audit>

² *Id.*

³ See https://nypost.com/2021/08/04/28-beer-at-laguardia-spurs-audit-of-airport-food-drink-prices/?utm_campaign=iphone_nyp&utm_source=message_app; <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9856991/Major-airport-retailer-faces-audit-investigating-food-drink-prices-tweet-showing-28-beer.html>

⁴ See <https://law.justia.com/codes/new-york/2016/pny/> (emphasis added)

The Port Authority's operations are marvels of modern transportation, the engines of the American economy, and billboards for the tri-state to the entire world. Simply put: travel is stressful enough. Being bamboozled at the bar for a bottle of beer is no way for our region to greet or wave goodbye to our neighbors. We look forward to your office leading the way on how concession improvements can be made to protect visitors to our airports.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Gregory Meeks
Member of Congress